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Donors urged to evaluate Japan charities

Phoenix Business Journal - by Lynn Ducey

Date: Tuesday, March 15, 2011, 12:07pm MST

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As efforts begin to aid those in Japan affected by the 9.0-magnitude earthquake and the resulting tsunami, Arizona leaders are urging people to evaluate each group before making a donation.

Arizona Attorney General **Tom Horne** says consumers should be cautious and make contributions only to reputable, established charitable organizations.

"While tragedies such as the disaster in Japan bring out the best in most people, they bring out the worst in others; and the result is that scam artists will prey on consumers who want to help by making a financial contribution," Horne said in a prepared statement. "I'm urging Arizonans to give generously to relief efforts, but to make sure their contributions are used for their intended purpose."

Reputable organizations are registered with the Arizona Secretary of State's Office, www.azsos.gov.

Secretary of State **Ken Bennett** said people need to ensure the legitimacy of an organization.

"Kind-hearted people feel compelled to respond to tragic events like we witnessed in Japan over the past few days," he said in a prepared statement. "Unfortunately, with every crisis there seem to be those among us who invent despicable schemes designed to take advantage of our compassion. During this time, we must remain especially vigilant for these scams to ensure that our hard-earned money gets to the people who desperately need it."

Here are some sites that can help consumers evaluate nonprofits:

http://www.azsos.gov/business_services/Charities <http://www.charitynavigator.org/>

<http://www.bbb.org/us/charity/> <http://www2.guidestar.org/rxg/give-to-charity/nonprofits-working-in-the-pacific.aspx>